

Beyond Local Borders

Councilwoman Seeman serves and influences community and country

By PETER L. ROTHOLZ

As councilwoman for Long Island's 5th District, North Hempstead, Lee Seeman's responsibilities are clearly defined and apply to a spe-

PROFILE

cific geographic area. Being the woman she is, however, her influence extends far beyond those relatively narrow borders to communities thousands of miles from her home.

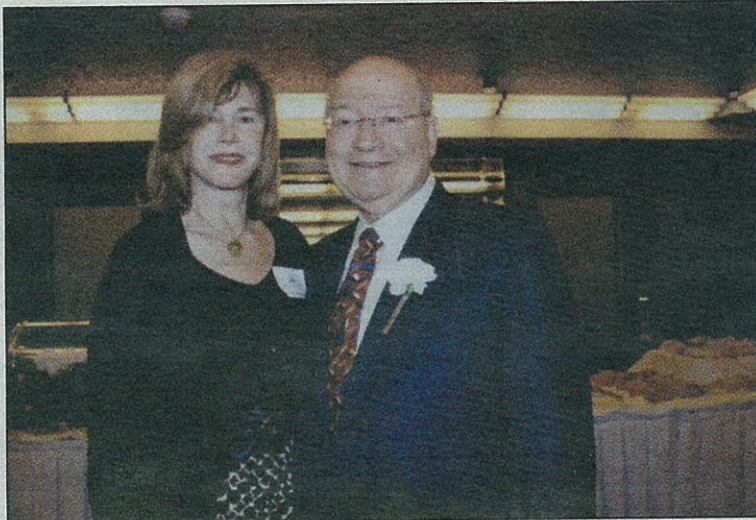
In addition to serving her local constituents, Seeman also serves her country as one of 21 civic leaders on the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad. She was first appointed a commissioner by President Bill Clinton and was reappointed by President George W. Bush. The Commission was created by Congress "because the fabric of a society is strengthened by visible reminders of the historical roots of the society." It is therefore in the interest of the U.S. "to encourage the preservation and protection of the cemeteries, monuments and historic buildings associated with the foreign heritage of United States citizens."

As a commissioner, Seeman is

involved in "identifying and reporting on these cultural properties in Central and Eastern Europe and seeking assurances from the governments of the region that the properties will be protected and preserved." The commissioners serve without compensation.

Since her appointment to the

of Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, to whom a special memorial tablet was also dedicated. Seeman not only helped raise the funds needed for the project, but visited Wyszkiw three times and participated with U.S. Ambassador Nicolas Ray and Polish dignitaries in the dedica-



Seeman's newest project is the preservation of a Jewish cemetery in Serock, Poland whose headstones (above) have been detached from their graves. (Left): Seeman and Cong. Gary Ackerman (right), whose mother was born in Serock.

Commission, Seeman has worked on two completed projects and has just begun a third. The first of these involved the reclamation of a devastated and abandoned Jewish cemetery in Wyszkiw, a small town in Poland some 30 miles Northeast of Warsaw, which was the home

tion ceremonies.

The second project, which was carried out in partnership with a British organization, the Holocaust Education Trust, memorializes the sites of 22 Nazi labor and concentration camps in Estonia. In addition to raising funds for markers for the mass

graves of some 1,000 murdered Estonian Jews, Seeman and her colleagues worked closely with the Jewish community of Estonia to ensure that the plaques accurately reflect the history of the Holocaust in Estonia. Seeman traveled to the site of the former Klooga labor camp, and spoke at the dedication ceremony in 2005.

Her third project, which is just beginning, concerns the effort to preserve and restore the Jewish cemetery in Serock, a *shtetl* about 25 miles North of Warsaw. Serock, the birthplace of Congressman Gary Ackerman's mother, has had a Jewish community for at least 500 years. During the Holocaust, the Jews of Serock were dispersed or killed, the tombstones of its cemetery were toppled and the cemetery wall was destroyed. Seeman is now in the process of fundraising to create a monument from the stones and stabilize the gate in the surrounding area. Anyone with roots in Serock or an interest in helping this project can contact the councilwoman at (516) 869-7692.

In reflecting on her work as a commissioner Seeman said, "This is the best thing I can do ... we have some very important things over there, they shouldn't be lost!"

Seeman had the opportunity to visit Iran in 1966 where she met with the queen on issues of women in politics. Since the fall

of the Shah of Iran the Town of North Hempstead and, specifically, Great Neck, has seen a large influx of Persian immigrants. Seeman has worked closely with the leaders of this community. She ran a variety of educational programs to foster better relations between the local residents and Persian immigrants and was involved in sponsoring a Persian concert attended by some 3,000 local citizens.

A native of New York, Seeman attended the University of Miami and had a career as an insurance broker. She first became interested in politics during the 1956 presidential campaign when she worked on behalf of Adlai Stevenson. Her first elected office was as district leader of the 16th Assembly District. She is also a Democratic State Committeewoman representing the 16th Assembly District.

Her community activities include the Great Neck Chamber of Commerce, which she serves as program director. She sits on the Board of Directors of the Eleanor Roosevelt Legacy Committee and is a member of Temple Beth El of Great Neck. Together with her husband she was a founder of the Long Island Archaeological Association and is also a trustee of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem.

Lee Seeman is married to Murray Seeman, a former mayor of Great Neck Estates, who was recently honored by the Nassau County Bar Association for his 70 years as an attorney. The Seemans are long-time residents of Great Neck and have four children and seven grandchildren.